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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 CHENGDU 000251

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SUBJECT: TIBET VICE GOVERNOR: SLAMS DALAI LAMA, DENIES POLITICAL OPPRESSION, OUTLINES CHINESE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS

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CLASSIFIED BY: David E. Brown, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General Chengdu.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Dalai Lama and his "clique" masterminded the "March 14" incident as part of a bid to take back feudal power in Tibet, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) Vice Governor Wu Yingjie told Consul General October 20. The many people praying at temples in Lhasa testify to the government's protection of religious freedom; during the current 11th Five-Year Program, the TAR invested much money in restoring religious sites and protecting Tibetan culture, he asserted. After the meeting, CG presented to Wu a list of 10 prisoners of conscience in the TAR.

¶2. (SBU) Tax exemptions for farmers and herders, free medical care, subsidized housing, education and vocational training, and investments in protection of traditional Tibetan culture are improving the lives of ethnic Tibetans, Wu said. Nearly all rural Tibetans can read; however, one-quarter of Tibetans still live without electric power. Tibetans are not economically marginalized and discrimination based on ethnic background is illegal, Wu asserted.

¶3. (SBU) As Tibet gets warmer and drier due to global climate change, many glaciers are melting. The State Council decided to invest USD 2 billion over 20 years in climate change mitigation by protecting grasslands, forests, and marshland, and to develop clean energy resources. Talk about extending the Qinghai-Lhasa railroad to Nepal has no basis; it is "just a beautiful Nepali dream." Wu had no comment on press reports about a proposed Sichuan - Tibet railroad. End summary.

Vice Governor: Dalai Lama Engages in Politics With

Foreign Help; China Protects Tibetan Religion, Culture

¶4. (SBU) The "Dalai" uses his religious role for political purposes, Vice Governor Wu asserted. The "March 14th Incident" was masterminded by the Dalai in order to destroy the Beijing Olympics. The Dalai just doesn't want to lose his power. In the old days, five percent of the people controlled 95 percent of the land. The Dalai wants to restore his feudal rule, but the serfs have already been liberated. America freed all the black slaves and people welcomed that, but China freed all the

Tibetan slaves under the "Dalai Clique," and some people are not happy. "I don't know why," Wu protested.

¶15. (SBU) Some foreign countries also give money to the Dalai and send high-level delegations to Dharamsala. For example, U.S. Speaker of the House (Nancy) Pelosi and a (Note: White House senior staff member. End note) special emissary both went to Dharamsala to see the Dalai Lama. The Dalai is asking China to withdraw its People's Liberation Army (PLA), and other non-Tibetan people from the region, and is trying to create a so-called "Greater Tibet" that would include ethnic Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan and Gansu. No sovereign state could accept such demands, which would divide the country, Wu said.

¶16. (SBU) The government protects religious freedom and manages religious affairs in accordance with the law, Wu asserted. You can see hundreds of people visiting temples and praying every day in Lhasa, he said. After the March 14th (2008) incident, 950 people were arrested and 80 of them were sentenced, Wu said.

Two hundred monks from outside of the TAR who were in the TAR without legal documents were sent back to their home areas, but no monks or nuns are missing. The government views the monasteries as public units (gonggong danwei). Therefore, the government provides the monasteries with free medical care, drinking water, and electricity, and also builds and maintains roads to the monasteries, he said.

¶17. (SBU) During the current, 11th FYP, the TAR has invested considerable money in the protection of Tibetan culture, Wu stated. For example, the government invested 380 million RMB in repairs of the Potala Palace, and the Sakya, Norbulinka, and Tashi Lhunpo Monasteries. The government has built many

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hospitals of traditional Tibetan medicine in the region, and protected about 100 kinds of Tibetan customs as part of the PRC's "national intangible cultural heritage." People in the TAR enjoy holidays for the major traditional Tibetan festivals, he added.

Chengdu CG Presents List of Prisoners of Conscience

¶18. (C) In a private moment just after the meeting, Consul General presented Vice Governor Wu with a list of 10 representative prisoners of conscience in Tibet. The Vice Governor accepted the name list, but the accompanying TAR FAO officer subsequently indicated his displeasure at the presentation of this list during a protocol visit. The next day, on October 21, Consul General attempted to present the same name list, along with a brief outline of each case, to Justice Bureau officials. While the officials angrily rejected the list, and claimed that CG would have to work through AmEmbassy Beijing to present the list to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the accompanying, working-level TAR Foreign Affairs Officer (FAO) later accepted the list. ConGen Chengdu PolOff prepared this list with the help of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China which maintains a database on prisoners of conscience in Tibetan areas of China. This list is copied below in final paragraph 23.

Rural TAR Gains During 11th Five Year Program

¶9. (SBU) During the 11th Five-Year Program (11th FYP), 70 percent of TAR economic development funds have been invested in rural areas, Wu said. Rural per capita income in the TAR, which reached 3170 RMB (USD 465) in 2008 and is expected to climb another 15% in 2009, has been growing rapidly. The TAR's per capita GDP is expected to reach a moderate level in 2010 and to reach the level of "xiaokang" (a basic standard of living) by ¶2010. [Note: by this standard the TAR will still lag behind the PRC as a whole; according to a 2002 Xinhua news report at URL tinyurl.com/xiaokang-xinhua, 90% of the PRC population met the basic standard of living criteria in that year. End note.] The TAR government has undertaken a series of policies to benefit Tibetans, Wu explained, while acknowledging that more improvements were needed:

¶10. (SBU) Education, Vocational Training; Support for Herders:

Tibetan language education is well developed in the TAR, Wu asserted. Rural children receive free compulsory education. The TAR offers free tuition, free food, and free accommodation for students who need to reside at school. The TAR covers up to 1300 RMB (USD 190) in annual expenses for primary school students and 1400 RMB (USD 206) for middle school students. Many rural schools teach classes in both Tibetan and Chinese. Some rural schools even teach English. With support from the Ministry of Information Industry, new technology has been developed to make the Tibetan language has become easier to use on computers. (In response to another question, Wu said that the TAR would like to teach courses in the natural sciences in the Tibetan language at the university level. Note: This would be difficult because of the lack of professors qualified to teach these subjects in Tibetan. End note.)

¶11. (SBU) The TAR is teaching rural people how to get rich through science and technology. Rural people are trained in various skills and then are sent to urban areas to work. The TAR also helps rural people to develop local industries. For example, people are taught how to: grow vegetables; build farms that raise Tibetan pigs and Tibetan chickens; sell agricultural products; and run family-operated tourist hotels. Currently, over 10,000 Tibetan households are running tourism-related businesses.

¶12. (SBU) TAR farmers and herders also received tax exemptions, and benefited from three long-term policies that will not change:

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- Households cultivate the land on their own;
- Herders raise their own private herds themselves; and
- Fixed grasslands grazing usage rights.

¶13. (SBU) Wu continued, before "liberation" only five percent of Tibetan people went to go to school; now, 80% of them are getting an education. (Note: PRC central government's occupation of Tibet in 1951. End note.) Middle school enrollment now includes 92 percent of children in that age group, while high school includes 91 percent of the people in the age group. Over 98 percent of rural youth and middle aged people are literate -- that is, they are able to read the Tibetan language edition of the Tibet Daily. The government also sends many Tibetan students to inland China to study for

free. Generous stipends are provided to students from the TAR who are accepted into a university in inland China.

¶14. (SBU) Health Care and Hospitals: Wu said that TAR rural health care has been improving. In 2009, residents of rural areas receive up to 140 RMB (USD 20) of medical care at no charge, an increase from 100 RMB (USD 15) in 2008. Of this sum, 125 RMB (USD 18) out of 140 RMB (USD 20) -- 90 percent -- is paid by the Chinese central government. This is a special allocation for the TAR that is higher than the national standard.

¶15. (SBU) The government has also built many rural hospitals and clinics, enabling more rural women to give birth in hospitals. With support from the government, many people have been relocated away from places where endemic diseases are widespread. [Note: For example, iodine deficiency disorders and Kaschin-Beck disease, a degenerative bone disease caused by the lack of selenium in the diet, has resulted in some government-sponsored migrations of villages within Tibetan areas of China to healthier areas. (See URL: tinyurl.com/nejm-kbeck-tibet .) End Note.]

¶16. (SBU) Housing: The TAR government established a goal to assist rural people in building or repairing their homes during the 11th FYP. Over 80 percent of rural homes will be built or rebuilt during this period. Out of the 300,000 households who want help in rebuilding their homes, 170,000 households (870,000 people) have already rebuilt their homes.

¶17. (SBU) Infrastructure and Electrical Power: Formerly, Tibet's infrastructure was very poor, there were few roads, and there was only one small hydropower station in Lhasa, said Wu. Now, however, rural transportation is well developed, although many more roads need to be built since the TAR's 2.2 million rural people are scattered over a vast area. The TAR has invested billions of RMB in the construction of 50,000 km of paved roads. The government is building roads to rural homes, and infrastructure to bring them water and electricity. The government has also promoted the use of rural energy systems, so that many rural people now use solar power, wind power, small hydropower stations, as well as diesel generators.

¶18. (SBU) Tibet needs to build more hydropower stations since 700,000 people in the TAR still live without electricity, Wu acknowledged. (Note: This is roughly one-quarter of the population. The TAR does not, however, publish energy-efficiency data or electrical consumption data in major national statistical publications like the China Statistical Yearbook 2009. The dearth of statistical data on the TAR makes it difficult to corroborate Wu's claims. Some press reports have also suggested that the TAR seeks to develop hydropower for export to other provinces, although the TAR lacks the long distance power transmission lines to export power and is fragmented into four power grids and several independent county-level power grids. Long distance DC Lhasa-Qinghai power transmission lines will be completed in 2010. End note.)

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Response on Economic Marginalization of
Tibetans and "Tibetans Need Not Apply" Shop Sign

¶19. (SBU) In response to Chengdu CG's question about the economic marginalization of ethnic Tibetans in the TAR, and about a sign on a Lhasa shop seen by CG that only ethnic Han would be hired for a particular job, Wu said that Tibetans are not economically marginalized, and "I don't know why people say such things." There are many programs to give special assistance to Tibetans. There are many Tibetan businesspeople. Businesspeople are free to hire Tibetans or ethnic Han Chinese. It is impossible to develop such a rapidly growing economy without the participation of ethnic Tibetans. In the TAR, 70 percent of the civil servants are ethnic minorities and only 30 percent are ethnic Han. [Note: At the top, the story is different. Two-thirds (16) of the 24 senior TAR officials we met in our meetings were ethnic Han. End note.]

Comment: Massive Welfare Support for Tibetans,
Little Awareness of Ethnic Discrimination

¶20. (C) When asked about the economic marginalization of ethnic Tibetans, both Vice Governor Wu and the FAO denied this was true, citing the considerable welfare support Tibetans receive from the government as evidence that Tibetans were not being economically marginalized. The question about the "No Tibetans need not apply" sign surprised the vice governor, who did not seem to be sensitive to the question of ethnic discrimination in employment. He responded that an employer might want someone who speaks Chinese and so would prefer a Han. One ethnic Tibetan in Lhasa, when he heard this story, told us "They (the Han) just don't get it."

Mitigating Harmful Effects of Climate Change on Tibetan Plateau

¶21. (SBU) The TAR government is doing its best to protect the ecology and the environment in the region, but global warming is melting many of the TAR's glaciers, Wu said. The climate is getting drier, with little rain in the summer, and little snow in the winter. Therefore, the State Council in March 2009 decided to invest 15 billion RMB (USD 2.19 billion) to protect the TAR environment through 2030. This money will be used to protect grasslands, forests, and marshland, and to develop clean energy in the region.

Extension of Railway to Nepal is Just a Beautiful Nepali Dream

¶22. (SBU) In response to a question from CG, Vice Governor Wu said that China plans to build a railway line from Lhasa to Shigatse but there are no plans to build a railway line from Lhasa to Nepal. That is just a "beautiful dream in Nepali hearts," Wu said, since China and Nepal have a very close relationship. Wu said that he could not confirm plans to build a railroad from Chengdu to Lhasa. (Note: A report by the Second Railway Institute that was posted briefly on the Institute's entitled "Environmental Impact Statement (summary) a New Railway Line Between Chengdu and Chaoyanghu, A Segment of the Sichuan to Tibet Railway" (online at URL tinyurl.com/chengdu-lhasa-rr) hints at railway concepts under consideration. According to press reports, this route would be much more difficult and expensive than the Qinghai-Tibet railroad; no final decision seems to have been made. End Note.)

Representative Prisoners of Conscience in the TAR

¶23. (SBU) BEGIN LIST

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Jigme Gyatso (Jinmei Jiacao) (Detained 1996)

Jinmei Jiacao, a former monk who operated a restaurant in Lhasa, was detained in March 1996 and sentenced on November 23, 1996. He is imprisoned in Qushui Prison where he is serving an 18-year extended sentence for printing leaflets, distributing posters, and later shouting pro-Dalai Lama slogans in prison. His sentence will be complete in March 2014. Unofficial sources have reported that he has suffered from jaundice, has difficulty walking and bending, and was hospitalized for several weeks in ¶2006.

Bangri Chogtrul, or Jigme Tenzin (Jinmei Danzeng) (Detained 1999)

Jinmei Danzeng, a lama who lived as a householder, was detained in August 1999 and convicted of inciting splittism and sentenced to life imprisonment on September 26, 2000. He and his wife managed a children's home in Lhasa. The Lhasa Intermediate People's Court commuted his sentence from life imprisonment to a fixed term of 19 years in July 2003, and then reduced his sentence by one year in November 2005. He is serving his sentence, which will be complete in July 2021, in Qushui Prison. He suffers from heart disease and gallstones.

Choeying Khedrub (Quyín Kezhu) (Detained 2000)

Quyín Kezhu, a monk living in Suo (Sog) county in Naqu (Nagchu) prefecture, was detained in March 2000 and sentenced to life imprisonment for endangering state security on November 10, ¶2000. He and several other men set up a political group that printed and distributed leaflets. He is serving his sentence in Qushui Prison.

Drolma Kyab (Zhuomajia) (Detained 2005)

Zhuomajia, a school teacher in Lhasa, reportedly was detained in March 2005 for drafting a Chinese-language commentary that addressed topics including Tibetan sovereignty, democracy, religion, and the Tibetan experience under communism. A second draft addressed topics such as the location of Chinese military bases in Tibetan areas. The Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced him on September 16, 2005, to 10 years and 6 months in prison for espionage and illegally crossing the border. He is serving his sentence in Qushui Prison.

Sonam Gyalpo (Suolang Jiebu) (Detained 2005)

Suolang Jiebu, a tailor in Lhasa, was one of several Tibetans detained in August 2005, shortly before the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region on September 1, ¶1965. State security officials searched his Lhasa home and found photos and videotapes of the Dalai Lama and printed matter. The Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced him on June 9, 2006, to 12 years' imprisonment for espionage. He is serving his sentence in Qushui Prison. He previously served a three-year

sentence for putting up political posters in September 1987.

Lodroe (Luozhui) (Detained March 2008)

Luozhui, a monk from Shiqu (Sershul) county, Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, who was studying temporarily at Sera Monastery in Lhasa, joined other monks visiting Sera to stage a political protest in Lhasa's Barkor street on March 10, 2008. China Tibet News reported that Lodroe held up a Tibetan national flag during the protest and described the other monks as Luozhui's "followers." According to an unofficial August 2009 report, in April 2009 a Lhasa court sentenced Luozhui to 10 years' imprisonment and he is serving his sentence in Qushui Prison.

Lobsang Ngodrub (Luosang Ouzhu) (Detained March 2008)

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Luosang Ouzhu, a monk from Shiqu (Sershul) county, Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan province, who was studying temporarily at Sera Monastery in Lhasa, joined other monks visiting Sera to stage a political protest in Lhasa's Barkor street on March 10, 2008. China Tibet News reported that on March 24, 2008, 13 of the monks were formally arrested on charges of "unlawful assembly." According to an unofficial August 2009 report, Luosang Ouzhu was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and is serving his sentence in Qushui Prison.

Wangdu (Wangdui) (Detained March 2008)

Wangdui, an HIV/AIDS activist, was detained on March 14, 2008, the day protests and rioting erupted in Lhasa. On October 27 the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced Wangdui to life imprisonment for "espionage," claiming that he established a group including three other men to distribute material to incite a "Tibetan people's uprising" and to collect "intelligence" that touched on "the security and interests of the nation." Wangdui previously served eight years in prison after detention on March 8, 1989, the day martial law took effect in Lhasa after three days of protest and rioting. Prior to the 1989 detention Wangdu was a monk at Lhasa's Jokhang Temple.

Yeshe Choedron (Yixi Quzhen) (Detained March 2008)

Yixi Quzhen, a retired medical doctor, was detained in Lhasa in March 2008 following protests that began on March 10 and rioting on March 14. On November 7, 2008, the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court sentenced Yixi Quzhen to 15 years' imprisonment for "espionage," claiming that she received "financial aid" from "the Dalai Clique's 'Security Department'" for providing "intelligence and information harmful to the security and interests of the state." According to an October 2009 report, she is serving her sentence in a prison near Lhasa and has not been permitted any family visits.

Tenzin Buchung (Danzeng Puqiong) (Detained March 2008)

Danzeng Puqiong, a Langthang Monastery monk studying at Samye Monastery, joined a group of Samye monks and "hundreds" of other

Tibetans in a peaceful protest near government offices in Samye township, located in Zhanang (Dranang) county, Shannan (Lhoka) prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region. The protesters shouted slogans calling for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet and respect for human rights. Public security officials detained an unknown number of persons, including at least five monks. In May or June 2008, the Shannan Intermediate People's Court sentenced Danzeng Puqiong to 15 years in prison.

END LIST
BROWN